

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seniors Task Force Members Send Letter to President Urging Him to Protect Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Members of the House Democratic Caucus Seniors Task Force, led by co-chairs Congresswoman Doris Matsui(D-CA) and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), sent [a letter](#) to President Obama asking that he protect Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security as he continues to work on a deal to raise the debt ceiling. The Task Force stressed that cuts to benefits in these programs would have a profoundly negative impact on the lives, and health, of older Americans.

Congresswoman Matsui stated, “Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are vitally important programs in our country, especially for our nation’s seniors – they should in no way be used as a playing card in the political game that is the debt deal. While we are ready and willing to work to improve these programs and shore up their solvency, a cut to benefits is simply out of the question.”

“It’s a non-starter to cut programs that serve middle-income and low-income seniors in order to continue to give the wealthiest Americans additional tax breaks,” said Congresswoman Schakowsky. “Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid are critical for millions of Americans and their families. They ask us to hold firm and not cut their benefits. We ought to get our fiscal house in order, but not on the backs of those who have the least to do with causing the deficit.”

The letter was co-signed by Rep. Joe Baca, Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, Rep. Leonard Boswell, Rep. Kathy Castor, Rep. Donna Christensen, Rep. Gerald Connolly, Rep. John Conyers, Rep. Joe Courtney, Rep. Mark Critz, Rep. Peter DeFazio, Rep. Ted Deutch, Rep.

Lloyd Doggett, Rep. Bob Filner, Rep. Raul Grijalva, Rep. Colleen Hanabusa, Rep. Maurice Hinchey, Rep. Mazie Hirono, Rep. Kathy Hochul, Rep. Hank Johnson, Rep. John Larson, Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, Rep. Michael Michaud, Rep. Bill Pascrell, Rep. Nick Rahall, Rep. Laura Richardson, Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard, Rep. Linda Sanchez, Rep. John Sarbanes, Rep. Bobby Scott, Rep. Albio Sires, Rep. Jackie Speier, Rep. Betty Sutton, Rep. Paul Tonko, and Rep. Henry Waxman.

The text of [the letter](#) is below:

Dear Mr. President,

The Congressional Task Force on Seniors is committed to protecting the financial security, health, and well-being of America's seniors. As members of the Task Force, we want to thank you for your leadership in fighting for those priorities and urge you to continue to oppose harmful cuts, or reductions in benefits, to programs that benefit older Americans, specifically in Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. At a time when older Americans are less secure in their retirement and less able to afford quality health services, now is not the time to cut their benefits.

America's seniors are facing increasing financial hardships, exacerbated by the loss of defined benefit pensions, the erosion of retirement savings, and two years without any cost-of-living increase in Social Security benefits. The average senior citizen in America lives on a fixed income of slightly more than \$19,000 a year. Two-thirds of retirees rely on Social Security for more than half of their income, one-third for 90 percent or more – yet Social Security retiree benefits average \$14,000 a year, \$2,000 less for women.

Although over 90 percent of seniors saved for retirement, less than half have been able to save more than \$50,000. With the cost of daily basic necessities such as groceries, gas, and medical care on the rise, many of America's senior citizens are simply unable to afford further financial strains.

As older Americans rely on Social Security, they also rely on Medicare and Medicaid for their health and long-term care needs. Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, we took measures to lower health care costs without cutting benefits or increasing cost-sharing requirement. While we can make more improvements, we must not abandon that commitment. Proposals to raise out-of-pocket costs, cut benefits, or reduce federal Medicaid spending would have a negative impact on current enrollees, their families, and our economy as a whole.

We fully understand the fiscal crisis our nation faces. We stand ready to work with you, our colleagues across the aisle, and the Senate to develop and implement a package that both ensures that the United States does not default on its loans and responsibly reduces the federal debt. As we approach the 46th Anniversary of the passage of Medicare and Medicaid, and the 76th Anniversary of the passage of Social Security, we are confident that, through your leadership and commitment to the wellbeing of older Americans, a deal can be struck that does not negatively impact the lives of America's seniors.

For more information on the Democratic Caucus Seniors Task Force, visit dems.gov/seniors .

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